

National Police Week and Officer Friendly

This year the week of May 15-21 is National Police Week. In Dodge County we are having our Law Enforcement Memorial at 11:00 am on Wednesday, May 11, 2016. It will be held at the law enforcement memorial in front of the Dodge County Administration Building in Juneau. The event is free and open to the public with a short lunch to follow which costs \$10. This is a great opportunity to show your respects to fallen law enforcement officers.

Police officers and sheriff's deputies have a tough job. We investigate criminal activity and we are also social workers helping people through difficult times. There are times that we give educational presentations and other times that we walk people through civil matters like child custody issues or property disputes, but in all that we do for the community, we seem to have lost that "officer friendly" perception. There are a number of reasons that this image has been sullied, including how we are portrayed by the media or by those who show very little if any respect for authority. Regardless of the cause, we must all work to get it back.

Unfortunately some see police officers and deputy sheriffs only as those who take people to jail, write tickets and "ruin everyone's fun". Some critique everything we do no matter how much good comes from it. Many times they claim to know better because of something a friend told them, something they saw on the internet or they claim to have taken a criminal justice class. Unfortunately, those people have no idea the amount of training and experience that is required and that the job is much more difficult than it looks. Law enforcement officers are required to have college education, a 720 hour academy, a 16 week field training program and at least 24 hours of recertification training each year to stay current and proficient in ever changing laws and procedures. Above all, the experiences we are involved in every day give us valuable insight in making sound lifesaving decisions in the future.

Why is it that some people feel the need to so heavily criticize and yet rarely do the same when it comes to other professions? We are asked to walk a fine line and make split second decisions that affect people's lives for years. After those decisions are made, people with differing political, philosophical or personal beliefs critique them. Even when law enforcement officers make a great decision or arrest like taking drugs off the streets, keeping guns out of the hands of dangerous felons or stopping an armed gunman before they are able to take the lives of students at a prom, we are still criticized. I have to ask, how would you feel if someone with no training or experience in your profession questioned the decisions that you make in your job?

Police officers and sheriff's deputies do their best to keep you and your families safe. They respond to requests for assistance, car crashes (sometimes fatal), sexual assaults, subjects who are depressed or suicidal, domestic disturbances and so much more. They run into tragedy and danger when everyone else runs away.

That next time you see an officer or deputy, take time to thank them. Also, don't tell your kids that we will take them to jail if they are naughty, tell them that we are here to help and keep them safe. Teach your kids that officers and deputies are their friend and someone they can call or run to if they are in danger or need help. Welcome Officer Friendly back as we do our best in our efforts to keep Dodge County a safe and enjoyable place to live, work and visit.